

**Minutes of the Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board AGM  
At 11.30am on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018, at the Loch Fyne Hotel, Inveraray**

**Attendees:**

Roger Brook (ADSFB Chair/Awe district rep)- RB  
Bob Younger (Clerk)- BY  
Alan Kettle White (AFT Biologist)- AKW  
Alyssa Stewart (ADSFB/AFT admin)-AS  
Andrew Barker (AFT Chair/Ruel district reop) – AB  
Tuggy Delap (AFT director)  
Hugh Whittle (Nell district rep) – HW  
Jonathan Brown (AFT director/fishery proprietor-JB  
Mark Smith (co-opted AFT director)  
David Stewart (AFT director/Creran district rep)- DS  
Hugh Nicol (AFT director/fishery proprietor)  
Caroline Fleming (Arran district rep)  
Beth Nicholson (Nell and Euchar rep)  
Jamie Mellor (fishery proprietor)

**Members of Public:**

Campbell Thomson -CT  
Ewan Kennedy – Save Seil Sound -EK  
Rebecca Smith (Forestry Commission)  
Anna Groundwater

**Apologies:**

Elizabeth Drummond Young (fishery proprietor)  
Rosie Campbell Preston (fishery  
William Duff (D.D.AC rep)  
Raymond Mundie (fishery proprietor)  
John Tilly (fishery proprietor)  
Ian Tegner (fishery proprietor)  
Duncan Rogers (fishery proprietor)  
Louisa Rogers (fishery proprietor)  
Ian Amory (fishery proprietor)  
James McGrigor (fishery proprietor)  
Tony Huntington (fishery proprietor)  
Mr Forde (fishery proprietor)  
Frans Van Bommel (fishery proprietor)

**Introduction and Apologies**

Roger Brook thanked everyone for coming. AS read out the apologies.

**Approval of the previous minutes**

Proposed by all attendees and accepted as accurate.

**Declaration of Members' Interests**

None.

**Matters arising**

None.

**Finance & Clerk's Annual Report**

The accounts were discussed (also available online). Income was £69,073 from levies, £22,570 from SSE. Part of the levy was distributed to RIA's and part kept by the Board in a river improvement fund for those with RIAs.

JB asked what proportion of money owed. RB explained that it is small amounts accumulated over past years, most levies have been paid. Outstanding debtors will be sent a lawyer letter this year.

The accounts were approved.

BY gave a report on the activities of the Board – see 2017 Annual Report online at <http://arfyll.dsfb.org.uk/publications/>.

BY explained that as Clerk, he is only available on a de minimis basis, AKW has responded to the aquaculture consultations and other necessities. BY will ensure the board meets its obligations. AS and AKW have picked up the pieces substantially.

RB explained that the rivers are at category 3, ADSFB are happy for 100% catch and return as salmon numbers are in decline,

BY spoke of the Scottish Governments initiative to reintroduce beaver, which surveys have shown would have an impact on the rivers and their habitat. This is problematic for the ADSFB. There are mitigation techniques available, but they will be expensive. The fortunes of beaver and salmon would be opposed, one reason being that the rivers are small and beavers building their dams will interfere the flow of the river and access for salmon.

AKW has been responding to the consultations from various organisations. BY gave thanks to the AFT for their input and feedback. Historically, Craig has given a well-documented objection to SSC who were unable to farm at the standard they were expected to, combined with objections to consultations this is a good opportunity to show our concerns.

By working alongside Fishery Management Scotland an opportunity is given to ADSFB to make their points of the effect of fish farms on wild salmon. BY explained that the fisheries could be a good income creator/generator if they had the opportunity.

RB is on the board for Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) and can advocate as a representative of ADSFB and offer views.

TD queried the catch figures on the River Fyne, it was clarified that this was in fact included the Fyne District, not just River Fyne.

### **Aquaculture update and discussion**

Government has responded to petition through two committees, the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee (ECCLR) and the Rural and Economy Connectivity Committee (RECC). The ECCLR commissioned a literature survey about the effects of aquaculture and people's reaction. They sent the findings to RECC who are reviewing the report. This is available on the Scottish Parliaments website in their archives. There appears to be a mood shift, now the Government and the aquaculture

industry's denial of any responsibility has vanished. They are both now acknowledging there is a serious issue and that the current regulatory system is not fit for purpose. We are represented through FMS and others such as John Aitchison from Friend of the Sound of Jura. ADSFB will be responding this week. This could be the beginning of a new dawn in terms of attitude and monitoring of the industry. Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) standards and Planning conditions are significant drivers for increasing environmental standards which include potential effects on wild fish. There may also be tighter regulation by government agencies following the inquiry. ASC have asked for the industry to monitor the environment outside the farm not just on the farm. The AFT has been asked by Marine Harvest (MHS) to do this monitoring for them, referred to as Environmental Management Plans (EMP's). This will give us a tool to see the effects on the fish farms and wild fish. BY added that this comes from a debate in which SEPA and Marine Scotland originally denied responsibility, and consequently fell on the responsibility of the Council and their planning department. Pressure was put on for an EMP which gives a quicker response. If the EMP's show a hike in sea lice numbers then there needs to be a mechanism to prevent damage to wild fish.

The new chairman of FMS has asked for £1million per year to put 'right some wrongs' that have been done on the west coast. It is beginning to look like it might happen, but RB stressed that this money must not be controlled by the fish farmers. Negotiations are ongoing and fish farmers would give the money through SSPO. AKW is on a Technical committee and trying to agree a method. Timing is everything.

EK spoke of the Save Seil Sound organisation. He spoke of his background as a solicitor, he has always been involved in the sea and has a love of boat building. Kilmelford has seen a spate of mussel farms applications in the past, however you can't grow mussels in the Kilmelford area due to various environmental reasons. There are now fish farm applications coming in, they were promised a 'lessons learnt' report which has never happened, EK produced the report for them. Following today he will send periodical reports to the ADSFB for distribution.

BY thanked EK for attending. He asked what they want out of the Government, EK wants a reviewed regulatory system as the current one doesn't work. The prosecution system cannot work, they can't rely on bodies self-incriminating. BY pointed out that they should be cautious of what to expect. TD asked regarding mussel farming, why have they all gone. EK was not sure why this has happened and is an

interesting point. RB is an avid follower of EK's organisation and asked that they work together, along with other organisations, minimising the duplication of work.

The Salmon and Trout Conservation have asked ADSFB to support a statement which was read out and all agreed that they supported it as does the AFT.

### **Argyll Fisheries Trust presentation with Argyll and West Catch Statistics Analysis**

AKW gave this presentation, which is available at <http://argyll.dsfb.org.uk/publications/>.

The Awe barrage counter been in place for over 50 years. AKW explained that with the addition of a camera there is a better understanding of the timing of returns, numbers and the stock composition.

The counts in the last few years have been hugely abnormal, 2016 showed a large number of early multi sea-winter salmon and virtually no one sea-winter grilse. Far lower than average counts of all salmon were noted in 2017, indicating a smolt survival issue due to a change at sea. It appears that those salmon that do survive may stay longer at sea to get large enough to return and become successful spawners. AKW spoke of the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation Theory which may influence the availability of food and the length of time salmon spend at sea.

Reported catches for the Argyll DSFB area in 2017 were 79 salmon, 67 grilse, 224 sea trout. Largest catch was from the River Awe. The 2017 figures are 44% of the 5-year average, which is low relative to historical catches.

CT asked if the low water level effected the fish going through the barrage. AKW explained that the flow of the river had no effect on the fish count as the river is always navigable by salmon.

Studies of juvenile fish by AFT show that this decline in the number of adults returning influences the number of juveniles; fry and parr and subsequently is likely to reduce smolt production from the river.

There is ongoing research being carried out by Marine Scotland Science on smolt survival at sea. Tags are being used to assess migration route of smolts and the percentage that return as adults in the Awe catchment over the next 10 years.

Of the potential factors affecting smolt survival in inshore marine waters, sea lice on fish farms have been shown to affect numbers of lice on wild sea trout and therefore possibly salmon. Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) published data show that average on-farm lice accounts were too high in the second year of production in the northern to mid Argyll area in the spring of 2016 and very high in the Loch Fyne area in the spring of 2017, which has potential to harm wild fish. High numbers of lice were found on sea trout in May 2017 suggesting there had been an effect on wild fish. Thoughts have been passed on to the fish farms.

FMS annual review shows several reports on catch statistics and projects that have been done. AKW was particularly interested in the nutrient enhancement strategy and the rising water temperatures found in nutrient poor headwaters with no tree cover. AKW spoke of the carcass replacement project which uses feed pellets to represent a salmon carcass, which will improve the invertebrate numbers and subsequently the number and diversity of juvenile fish. As the weight of fish increases so does their chance of survival during migration. This experiment is seen as a way of maximising the number of smolts being produced and therefore improving fisheries.

### **Election of Board Members**

RB thanked TD for all that she has done over the last few years.

RB read through all those that have agreed to continue.

John Taylor will be a co-opted representative for the Forestry Commission.

AB proposed that RB remains a convener.

All agreed.

### **AOB**

RB talks about the possibility of board amalgamations as there is government funding available. Options would be Mull Jura and Islay, none of which will be willing. There is also the option of an amalgamation with Eachaig which BY manages. RB explained that as the law stands, if organisations were willing to join then we would have to hold public consultations through the whole of Argyll, twice. RB is not keen to go ahead with the board amalgamation, the current method over estimates the amount of fish in the rivers, by not amalgamating we can highlight the realistic situation.

**Date of next meeting**

**31<sup>st</sup> October, TBC**